



A VOICE OF MODERN DRAUPADI IN CHITA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S NOVEL THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS

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ABSTRACT

This present research is entitled "A Voice of Modern Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel The Palace of Illusions is a critical reading of the novel from female perspective. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as a modern woman in the novel who is bold enough to fight against the male dominated society. She raises her voice for her rights and respect. Being a royal woman, she also understands pain and sufferings of common women around her. The entire novel is the re-telling of the great Indian epic Mahabharata. Divakaruni has given a new voice to her female character Draupadi who is not submissive. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presented Draupadi in the central role. The whole story revolves around her and it is supposed that Draupadi was the reason of destruction of kauravas. This research paper focuses on the different aspects of Draupadi's life and how she became strong and modern in the patriarchal world where voices of women are always neglected.

KEYWORDS: Draupadi, Mahabharata, Woman, Male-dominated society.

INTRODUCTION

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indo-American writer. She is eminent poet, short-story writer and novelist. She has written 'The Palace of Illusions from Draupadi's perspective. Two great Indian epics Mahabharata and Ramayana have written from male point of view. But Divakaruni has given female voice and female point of view while re-writing the story of Mahabharata in the novel The Palace of Illusions. Divakaruni wrote this novel as she was not satisfied with the portrayal of women characters in mythology she says; "I was left unsatisfied by the portrayals of women characters... they remain shadowy figures, their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when they affected the lives of the male heroes, their roles ultimately subservient to those of their fathers or husbands, brothers or sons. If I ever wrote a book... I would place the women in the forefront of the action. I would uncover the story that lay invisible between the lines of the men's exploits" (Divakaruni, xiv-xv)

In the novel Draupadi's character is not that of a lady who suffers silently inside and is unable to talk about her views. She develops a powerful trajectory of her own. Her first influence was on education, which she did not receive since her brother was given priority over her. Her guru told her brother Dhrishtadyumna to inform her that "A Kshatriya woman's highest purpose in life is to support the warriors in her life" (The Palace of Illusions, p.26).

King Drupad and Draupadi's guru neglected her education. When she questioned her brother "who decided that woman's highest purpose was to support men?" (The Palace of Illusions, p.26)

Draupadi feels this gender biasness since her childhood. She trains her mind to stop all these discriminations. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depicts the real condition of women from ancient time to present. She focuses on the treatment of men towards women. The writer also shows pain, suffering, compromises and humiliation of an Indian woman, who is always supposed inferior to man.

As Greek philosopher Aristotle said, "Male is always superior and the female inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled[...], it is better for them that they should be under the rule of their masters." (Politics p.190)

For many years women have been facing humiliation, inferiority, and restrictions. But Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has presented Draupadi bold enough to condemn this humiliation. She knows that a woman doesn't have her own choices in her entire life. She always supposed to follow footsteps of male. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reveals the intense feelings of Draupadi from her childhood to adulthood. Draupadi feels discrimination since her birth because she is a girl, Draupadi and her brother Dhrishtadyumna are not treated equally. The attitude of her father is quite different for both children. Regarding this Draupadi says;

"A girl being taught what a boy was supposed to learn? Such a thing had never been heard of in the royal family of Panchaal." (Palace of Illusions p.23)

When the time came of Draupadi's marriage she was compelled to get married with five pandvas brothers which was quite against her wishes. But being a woman she had to do so unwillingly. Draupadi has a soft corner for Karna but his caste becomes a barrier in their lives and she forced to marry with five male part-

ners. Her marriage became the big reason of her all sufferings. She dreamt to be a queen of a royal palace but result was quite opposite. Draupadi always get punishment of being a woman. In the court of royal palace of Hastinapur she was humiliated by kaurvas brothers. Yudhishtir, the elder brother of pandvas was invited by Duryodhana in Hastinapur. Yudhishtir and Duryodhana starts playing a gamble in which Yudhishtir has lost his all property even his brothers and his wife Draupadi too. Draupadi was taken as an object by her own husband. Dushasan, the younger brother of Duryodhan was gone in the room of Draupadi and dragged her in the royal court. Draupadi, the wife of five brave warriors was thrown disgracefully in front of all courtier, king Dhritrashtra, Bhishm pitamah and her five husbands. Draupadi's eyes are filled with disappointment and tears. She said in the court; "I'm a queen, Draughter of Draupad, sister of Dhrishtadyumna, Mistress of the greatest palace on the earth. I can't be gambled away like a bag of coins, or summoned to court like a dancing girl." (P.190)

Pointing towards her husbands she further said; "If perchance a man lost himself, he no longer had any jurisdiction over his wife." (P.190)

Bold Draupadi questioned to her husbands that who have given them right to stake her in the gambling they are only husbands of a woman not her lord to decide her life's destiny. Being a woman, she was not the property of her husbands. She has lost her honour. Why did Yudhishtir wager her? Man is supposed to protect a woman not to humiliate her physically. She said; "I found myself in court, a hundred male eyes burning through me. Gathering my disordered sari around me. I demanded help from my husband's." (P.191)

Possession of male is explicit. There was no voice to argue and no hand to protect her. Draupadi was ashamed badly in the court. Everybody was silent on this dishonour because the court was full of men having all the powers. Wiping out of her tears Panchaali gave curse to the entire Kuru dynasty and the viewers of her insult. Everything will destroy, nothing remains here, there will be no heir to continue this kingdom. People will know the result of dishonoring a woman in each period of time. This was revengeful attitude of Draupadi when she said; "I stitched discontent onto my features and let my hair fall, matted and wrathful, around my face. Each day as I served them meals, I reminded the pandvas how they'd failed me, and what I'd suffered as a result in Duryodhan's sabha." (P.199).

Now she has become a modern woman who has broken old barriers in the society. In the ancient time it is clearly seemed that women were treated as an object, goods and personal property of men. Divakaruni shows the helplessness of a woman through the character of Draupadi although she presents Draupadi very brave and courageous. She raised voice for her rights.

Divakaruni has written that: "I would uncover the story that lay invisible between lines of men's exploits. Better still I would have her one of her tell it herself, with all her joys and doubts, her struggle and triumphs, her heartbreaks, her achievement, the unique female way in which she sees her world and place in it." (XV)

Renuka Naryanan appreciated this novel The Palace of Illusion as "perhaps there was a modern Draupadi story in English before Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's but it has not come my way. Unsure of what I'd get as her earlier books did not quite work for me; I began to read The Palace of Illusion in a tentative sort of way. The 'mysterious woman' style of narration is unmistakably Divakaruni's."

(Narayana)

Conclusion: To sum up it is found in the entire study that Divakaruni's female characters are courageous they have broken the traditional boundaries to enter into a modern world where men and women both will be treated equally. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni highlighted women's pain, suffering and problems in a male dominating society. Draupadi was presented as a modern woman who stood against her humiliation and dishonor.

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